

Miracles 24-09-04a

Greetings fellow members and attendees and other assorted believers of like mind here at Grace & Truth Bible Church on Wednesday night. It's the 4th of September, 2024. And we're picking up our study of the miracles of the Lord Jesus.

We've looked at these in various ways across the years in terms of our gospels studies, our investigation of the miracles more or less in order of appearance. But we're looking at them in something of a new light in this study, particularly related to their significance to the teaching that accompanies them, the point that is being made beyond just the exercise of supernatural power. There is a message in the miracle that is pertinent and apropos for us today.

And counterintuitively, we do not live in the age of miracles and yet the miracles are recorded in scripture for our instruction and are written that we may have faith. John's seven fold sign structure in his gospel, he concludes by saying, Jesus did many things, but these are written that you might believe. And as we saw last time, this is exactly what happened with Jesus' own disciples.

Let's ask God's blessing on our fellowship and study and we'll resume. Father, we are grateful for another opportunity to spend a short time together in fellowship and mutual encouragement, receiving the blessing that comes anytime two or three of us are gathered in the Lord Jesus' name. We thank you for him, for his words and his works, his atoning sacrifice on the cross, his sinless life, the opportunity we have to be encouraged by his example in that he did what he did the same way that you enable us, which is through your spirit and through your word.

We pray that as we look at this portion of your word together, that the Holy Spirit will teach us, help us to see how it relates to what we are currently engaged in by way of circumstance and activity, that each of us will be more closely conformed to the example of the Lord Jesus, that we will be renewed in our minds and thoroughly equipped for every good work. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen. Amen.

Well, there is a sequence that we saw in the gospel of John that begins down at the Jordan. There are seven days, if you recall, between the first announcement that John records when John the Baptist says, there is one standing in your midst that you do not know. And over the course of the next four days, there are events that take place down there.

Then there is the two-day journey to Cana, and then the turning of the water into wine. And you could spend, I could do another four sessions at least just on that miracle, exploring the significance of the water turning to wine. We saw a few of the significances of blood as it is represented by wine, anywhere from the upper room and the cup, where Jesus says this cup of wine is the New Testament in my blood, and to coming not by

water only, but by water and by blood.

You can explore fruitfully and profitably so many of these connections. I want to focus on just two by way of quick review, because we are going to be back in Cana tonight for the second miracle, which is the healing of the nobleman's son. Miracle number one, the water turned to wine at the wedding feast of Cana.

Number two will be the healing of the nobleman's son. They are linked because both of them take place in Cana of Galilee, but not on the same occasion. Just a quick summary of some points that may not have come out clearly last time in looking at that first miracle.

We saw that Jesus said, my time has not yet come, and yet there is a need for action, not a life and death situation, but family honor is at stake. The desire of his mother is at stake. The ongoing celebration should not be marred by a shortcoming or a failure, whether it was bad planning or some other mishap.

These things were planned well in advance. You normally would never run out of wine for one of these. And the fact that this happens creates a situation where Mary goes to her oldest son, Joseph evidently being out of the picture, and says, we have a problem.

And he says, what is that to me? My hour has not yet come. This hour is his time of public revelation. But this fascinates me because Jesus has been recognized at the Jordan.

John the Baptist recognizes him, baptizes him. John and Andrew and Peter and Philip and Nathanael Bartolomeo, they have all met the Lord Jesus, recognized that John's testimony about him is valid. They believe in him and they follow him.

And they spend this time going back to Philip's hometown of Cana. Is it Philip or Nathanael that's from Cana? I'm suddenly drawing a blank. One of the two is from Cana.

And in any case, there has been no miracle. They did not see the spirit descending like a dove. Only John the Baptist saw that.

They have heard the testimony of John and they have heard the words of the Lord Jesus and they believe. Now he has said things that strike them as unusually perceptive. When Jesus says, I saw you sitting under the tree before we got here, behold a true Israelite in whom is no guile and so on.

But here's the point. There is belief before any sign miracles are done. If Jesus had raised someone from the dead or cleansed a leper or gotten some blind and deaf and lame people at the Jordan, and suddenly they were walking and talking and seeing and hearing, that would have sparked a great deal of interest in him.

How could that be a bad thing? Draw attention to the Lord Jesus. He's the Lamb of God. We can preach the gospel that you need to believe in him for salvation.

But Jesus does no miracle. John the Baptist does no miracle. And there are those who simply on the strength and the weight of testimony believe.

They hear the word and they believe. These men then accompany Jesus to the wedding feast and they alone are privy. It appears that the people at the feast had no idea that they were suddenly drinking miraculously crafted wine.

Even the head of the feast talking to the bridegroom says, you've saved good wine until the end. He doesn't say, wow, this miraculous wine really tastes exceptionally wonderful. He just thought that it had been kept back.

And he said, that's odd. People usually put the good stuff out while people still have a palate. And once they're well into their cups, so they put the cheap stuff out because nobody cares at that point.

And only the servants who draw the water and the disciples who are back there with the Lord understand what has taken place. Why? Jesus' hour has not yet come. He could have strode significantly into the middle of the feast, tapped his spoon on a glass, so to speak, and said, watch this.

Wine could have been flowing from no end of places. But the significance of this for us, we don't live in an age of robust public miracles. I do think that God performs miracles of all kinds.

I think he does healing miracles. I think he does supernatural preservation. I think he arranges circumstances.

I think he gives his angels charge over us just as he did his own son. And we do not dash our foot against a stone unless it is part of God's plan and purpose. And he is going to work it together for our benefit and his glory.

But they are not signs. And if you read the gospel of John, John talks about the fact that Jesus is going to do some things in Jerusalem between the wedding feast at Cana and coming back to Cana this second visit. But he doesn't count them as signs.

He's gonna call the healing of the nobleman's son this second sign he did in Cana of Galilee, even though he has mentioned that there have been other events. So they have different purposes. But at the wedding feast, Jesus' hour has not yet come.

He is in a preparatory phase. He is gathering the strongest and the best of his disciples. And they come to him without miraculous motivation.

And the strongest and the best of us don't require supernatural confirmation to place our

faith in the Lord Jesus for salvation or for the ongoing circumstances of our life. The word is sufficient. The testimony is enough for us to be convinced.

And this is an essential background point because Jesus' hour is going to come and he will publicly heal and heal in crowds and groups. And the word is gonna go forth throughout the land that he has this significant power, significant in the sense that it is a sign. But he doesn't come simply because there's been a rash of bad health in Israel and it needs resolution, just like the poor illness we have with us always.

These are signs. They signify that the message should be listened to. There are those who don't need a sign to recognize the value of the message.

There are others who refuse to even consider it unless they see a sign. And Jesus is gonna address that in our miracle tonight. So you could say logically and reasonably that if Jesus' hour has not yet come, then he shouldn't have done anything at the wedding feast.

He could have simply sent the servants out and hoped that they could find some wine someplace else that they could bring in. I suspect that someone may have already tried that at the point that Mary comes to Jesus. There aren't any of the normal options available or why trouble ye the master? Why would she trouble the Lord Jesus? But she comes to him and says, we're out.

And I mean, we are really out. Jesus says, my hour has not yet come, but we are gonna see this as a pattern over and over again. And this is the point to really take to the bank in our personal relationship with the Father through Christ and our expectations, our hope and our faith, and through those, our love for one another and for God.

It may appear that something isn't according to the rules. It's not the right time. It's not the right place.

It's not the right way. It just doesn't seem like something is going to be possible based on our common expectations and even our scriptural understandings. Jesus tells Mary, my hour has not yet come, but he finds a way to satisfy the need to honor her and her request and to accomplish the purpose without making it a public miracle and a sign that is going to be out of time, not proper to the hour.

He finds a way to do it to honor Mary. And if you go back and read Mary's song, once the angel tells her she's gonna be the mother of the Lord, she is an exceptional woman of faith, of insight. She takes the word of the Lord and ponders it in her heart.

The things that she observes as she's raising the Lord Jesus, she ponders them in her heart. She is told that her heart is going to be pierced with sorrow and so she knows that this is a very unusual situation and she would understand if Jesus says my hour has not yet come, she would say, well, you know, I didn't think it was the right hour for me to get

pregnant and have a son either, but it happened. But her request is honored and fulfilled and a miracle is performed even though it's really not the season for figs.

Jesus is gonna, at the end of his career, go looking to the tree for figs and he's gonna curse the fig tree for not having them even though it's not the season for figs because that particular tree is expected to have figs even though it's not the season for other trees, this tree is, it's supposed to be unique and special. And what we take away from this in my estimation is don't be daunted if circumstance and expectation seem to be against a request we have from the Lord. If we've got, for the Lord, and we're looking for an answer from the Lord, if we have a legitimate desire to serve others and Mary is in a service mode here in bringing about this celebration, this is gonna be memorable for the bridegroom and the bride for the rest of their lives.

You think of things that have happened on people's wedding day and if tragic news occurs or an accident happens, how can they ever celebrate their anniversary without that unhappy memory returning? You want it to be a day of celebration that lives in memory as one of the greatest days of life. And it is a service to try to bring that about for this couple. And this is what Mary is doing.

And when she makes a request, it isn't just, I don't wanna be put to any trouble or it's an inconvenience, she is expressing love for all of the people who have come, some from a great distance, including the Lord and his disciples to celebrate this union. And to not have it marred with some kind of failure, there was a setback of some kind, it should never have occurred that they would be out of wine. But the Lord Jesus doesn't let protocol or the fact that his hour hasn't come get in the way of honoring the request of a faithful woman.

We are gonna see this over and over again. People might be Samaritans, they might be Syro-Phoenicians. And it's not the time, it's not the place, but the Lord Jesus is gonna make exceptions in their case because of their faith.

Faith moves mountains. And even when the mountain is standard expectation, standard protocol, it's not the right time, it's not the right person, we're not in the age of the Gentiles yet, you're a Gentile, you're just going to have to wait. Jesus honors faith beyond the lines in which you would think he would be constrained to stay within.

He'll color outside the lines when there is someone of faith. When Jesus says faith moves mountains, even a little bit of faith, those mountains are there by God's design. Who created the mountains? Who put them in place? They serve as barriers, they funnel traffic and determine trade routes and weather and all kinds of things that are a part of God's overall plan and purpose.

But for people of faith, God will move his own mountains because faith is that important. It is that valuable and it is that rare and precious. When God finds faith, he will do

extraordinary things, even things that seem not a part of the hour, it's not the right time.

And you can think of some of the miracles coming up where this is the case. And it's going to be the case here in the second miracle that John records for us in John chapter four. So you will remember that the wedding feast is in John chapter two.

On the third day, there was a wedding in Cana. And after this, he went down in verse 12, John 2:12, he went down to Capernaum, he, his mother and his brothers and his disciples, and they did not stay there many days. They just stay for a short time.

Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. It's down on the map, but it's up because you always go up to Jerusalem, as you know. So Jesus was in Judea down at the Jordan.

He goes up to Cana, goes to Capernaum. Now he has gone back down for the assembly feast of Passover. When does Passover take place? In the spring.

This is the first spring assembly feast, feast of Passover. What feast is going to be prominent at the end of Jesus' career? This same feast. So what we have seen in John chapter one and John chapter two is just ahead of the first Passover in Jesus' career.

There's a few days that he spends here and there. Now it is Passover. The Passover of the Jews was at hand.

So Jesus went up to Jerusalem. A quick note here, because we are sensitive to people who are talking about the kingdom and being kingdom people and living kingdom values and practicing kingdom ethics and Jesus as king and so on. This is very popular and prominent in progressive Christianity that surrounds us today.

Pay attention to what it means for something to be at hand. What does it mean to be at hand? If Passover is at hand in verse 13 and Jesus is gonna go up to Jerusalem, this from Capernaum is a journey of some days, two or three days, right? We know this from when Jesus was 12, went down, back, how long was it before they missed him? So the Passover is at hand. It isn't Passover yet.

Do you see the difference between Passover was underway and Passover was approaching? At hand means it is approaching, but it is still a ways off. What is going to be the gospel that Jesus preaches and sends his disciples to preach? Repent, why? Why? For the kingdom of heaven is at hand. It is approaching.

He is not saying, look at me, I'm the king. The kingdom is here. It is approaching.

The kingdom is at hand. Repentance is preparation. When Passover is at hand, what do you have to do? Four days earlier, you've got to find your lamb and put it up and ensure that it's unblemished.

And you've got a whole process to prepare for celebrating the Passover, observing Passover. At hand, you're looking at it as future and there is a time of preparation. So when Jesus preaches this news that the kingdom is at hand, the message is prepare yourself, be ready when it comes.

It's not here yet, but it's coming. The Passover of the Jews was at hand. Jesus went up to Jerusalem and he found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, money changers doing business.

When he made a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple and with sheep and oxen poured out the changers money, overturned the tables. He said to those who sold doves, take these things away. Do not make my father's house a house of merchandise.

Then his disciples remembered that it was written, zeal for your house has eaten me up. So the Jews answered and said to him, what sign do you show to us since you do these things? Do you notice that Jesus didn't supernaturally tip the earth and all of the money changers and tables and animals went rolling out of the temple precinct. There wasn't a mighty divine wind that blew them out.

Angels didn't come and snatch them by the hair of their head and carry them out. This was a manual driving out that anyone with a fair amount of enthusiasm could do. So the Jews said, what sign do you show to us since you do these things? Jesus answered and said to them, destroy this temple.

And in three days, I will raise it up. You remember again, another symmetry at the end of his earthly career and the trials, they will bring these early words up three plus years later. This man said that he could destroy the temple and raise it up in three days.

They're not listening. What sign? If you destroy this temple in three days, I will raise it up. You destroy this temple.

The Jews said it's taken 46 years to build this temple. Will you raise it up in three days? But he was speaking of the temple of his body. Therefore, when he had risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this to them and they believed the scripture and the word which Jesus had said.

Remember in the wedding feast miracle, they had already believed in him and followed him to Cana. But then when they saw the miracle in verse 11, he manifested his glory and his disciples believed in him. So there's not just a one shot, I believe I'm saved, I'm done.

These are episodes of faith and a growing belief. They believe that he's worth following at the Jordan. They believe that he has God's power with him in Cana and they are going to believe that God hath raised him from the dead and they will recall these words and realize that he said something they did not understand at the time.

I've told you before that in seminary and in many places today, there is a consensus of academic belief that it is improper to understand anything in scripture that the original recipients would not have been able to grasp. That you can't see Satan and prehistory occurring in heaven when you look at the King of Tyre in Isaiah 14 or Ezekiel 28 because when Ezekiel delivered the prophecy, when Isaiah delivered his prophecy, no one would have understood it to be reflecting heavenly history. So that's illegitimate to read that in.

And I have sat in presentations by seminary presidents of note who've authored many books and whose names are recognizable. And they have said, it is wrong. You are reading meaning into scripture that isn't there.

I don't understand that approach because over and over again that it might be fulfilled, which was written, he shall be called a Nazarene. And the only place you find that in the Old Testament is when it says, he will be a netzer, a root shoot. It's a play on words.

Nazareth is a town, netzer is a root. Old Testament scripture says, there will be a root shoot from the stump of Jesse and he's gonna be the Messiah in a nutshell. And then that it might be fulfilled when he grows up in Nazareth, he will be called a Nazarene.

And there is a recognition that there is an anticipation and that this is a sign to those who know what to watch for that even though Jesus was born in Bethlehem, he's gonna be called a Nazarene. And why Nazareth? Why not Capernaum? Why not Cana? Why not any one of a number of towns? Because by coming from Nazareth, it ties him to this Old Testament scripture in a unique way. Same thing here.

They didn't understand that he was talking about his body when he said these words in Jerusalem. They will understand it later and look back and say, oh, that's what he meant. And we do this all the time with Old Testament scripture.

You review the Levitical offerings and the details of those rituals are lost on 99.5% of Christians in the world today. And it's tragic because each of those details, every single element of those sacrifices in their preparation, in their execution, in their presentation, in what is done afterward with ashes and what's done at the door of the tabernacle, what's done on the altar, what's done outside the camp, it is all significant and reflects and gives much more truth to the work of the Lord Jesus than is contained in the gospels or even the epistles of Paul. It is a beautiful unfolding and laying out of the work of redemption and reconciliation and atonement.

And to say there is no meaning in these because they would not have known that that represents something in the work of Christ is crazy town to me. You see an example of it here. When he had risen from the dead in verse 22, his disciples remembered that he said this.

They believed the scripture and the word which Jesus had said. This is now the third

instance of their belief that John records. They believe at the Jordan.

They believe at the wedding feast in Cana. Now they believe and he's looking forward to after he was raised. It also gives you an indication of the time in which the gospel of John was written that he is able to refer to the end of Jesus' life and his resurrection without having communicated it yet.

He assumes familiarity with the basic outline of Jesus' life and ministry. So he doesn't have to explain a lot here. He just says they'll remember it when he was raised from the dead.

Now, when Jesus was in Jerusalem at the Passover, this is verse 23, during the feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs which he did. Notice that there is a spread. There is a filtering process.

When you start a race of runners like a marathon, everybody's towing the starting line. And as the race progresses, circumstance and fatigue, sometimes weather and other things start to spread the field. And you have those who are out in front, you have those who are in the middle of the pack and you have those who are straggling behind.

But it takes some sort of resistance to expose those who are in the best shape and have the best ability and those who don't. The disciples who have followed Jesus to this point don't need a sign to believe. These people see the signs and believe when they see them, but Jesus did not commit himself to them because he knew all.

Who does Jesus commit himself to up to this point? Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, and Bartholomew, Nathanael. Those six, that's half the disciple core. The other half haven't even been called yet.

He has committed himself to them and he did no sign for them to believe. These who believe when they have seen a sign, Jesus did not commit himself to them. Their faith is not of the quality that Jesus can share with them the plans and purposes of God, the heart of the promise, the fulfillment, the hope.

He can't share it with them. If it takes a sign to prop up your faith, if you only believe, if you take convincing to believe, this is why Thomas doesn't go anywhere, doubting Thomas. And Jesus says, after he places his fingers in the scars, and he says, okay, now I believe.

Jesus says, you believe because you've seen the scars. Blessed are those who not having seen believe. This is us.

The church age, the retiring of miracles after the beginning of this age is to identify to be body of Christ, to be qualified for him to commit himself to us. We trust because we choose to trust, not because we've been convinced by miracles. We have seen

extraordinary signs.

We have the account of scripture and we believe on the basis of it. We have a seeking heart that is fulfilled and satisfied by the manna from heaven to be found in the pages of scripture. And that is the kind of people that God is looking for to grant as a gift to his victorious son, who has achieved salvation and redemption for all men, Israel and all of those who will come by faith.

Israel is one kind of possession of God. They have a specific set of promises. They have covenants.

They have a coming kingdom that is exclusive to them. Jesus will be their king in an exclusive way. We are different.

We are separate. We are not the nation of Israel. We are the body of Christ.

And we come not having seen the signs. Jesus is gonna say later, a crooked and perverse generation seeks a sign. No sign will be given it, but the sign of Jonah.

So that's why John says, Jesus did not commit himself to them because he knew all of them and had no need that anyone should testify of man for he knew what was in man. Jesus sees that this is a superficial belief. If you can be convinced by a sign, guess what will destroy your faith? Another kind of sign.

If your faith relies on a sign and then somebody says, oh, that wasn't a sign. He had a stooge in the audience that only pretended to be lame. And well, now your faith is gone.

It is into the heart where Jesus looks and he knows what's in our hearts. And he did not have a need for anyone to testify of him. He's looking for people who will believe.

So then you have John chapter three. And this of course, very famous, well-known chapter, Nicodemus coming to Jesus by night, must be born again. Gotta be born of water and the spirit.

Do not marvel that I said you must be born again. Verse 10, are you a teacher in Israel and do not know these things? How should a teacher in Israel have known about the new birth? Leviticus chapter 12 with Leviticus chapter 14. All you have to do is look at the walking dead who contracted leprosy and then were cleansed and the ritual where they essentially become newborn babies.

They were born the first time. They grew up to a certain age. They got leprosy.

They were outside the camp. They were cast out of the people. They were forbidden and prohibited.

They were defiled. They were corrupt. They were walking death, symbols of walking

death.

They are cleansed and they come to the priest and the priest walks them through these rituals. And on the eighth day, they shave every hair off of their body and they're anointed. Eighth day, it's the same day that a child was circumcised in Israel.

They can't be re-circumcised. So they are just presented in the same way that a baby would be. And they are born again and they enter back into the fellowship of Israel.

They are born again, born a second time, born into the fellowship. And it's a wonderful symbol. How could Nicodemus be a teacher in Israel and not understand that there is such a thing as being defiled, corrupted, cast out, and then being born back into the fellowship? Well, that's the middle of chapter three.

And you go on to chapter three, verse 15 and 16, well-known things. And after this dialogue is complete, then in verse 22, after these things, Jesus and his disciples came into the land of Judea and he remained with them and baptized. John was also baptizing in Anon near Selim because there was much water there.

They came and were baptized. So time is passing. It's been weeks now since the wedding feast of Cana.

And Jesus is looking at the difference between those who believe because of what they hear and those who will not believe unless they see. Can you believe the testimony or do you require a sign? We can ask ourselves the same question. When doubts are cast, when people try to tear the scriptures apart and say that they're a hodgepodge, they were written by people later, there was an agenda.

You know, Bart Ehrman has a book called How Jesus Became God. And he details this imaginary process whereby the scriptures came to affirm the deity of Jesus Christ. And in the beginning, it was not so, and so on.

People whose faith is built on logical arguments and constructions can have their faith deconstructed by logical arguments and persuasive, deceptive words. We choose to believe. We know there is a God in heaven, and we are persuaded that he is able to keep what we commit to him against that day.

And tell me what you want, show me what you will, cast whatever aspersions you want. I choose to believe and I will never not choose to believe. And because our faith is not founded on signs, there is no sign in heaven on earth that will deceive us into sacrificing our faith.

As will happen after the rapture, in the time of tribulation, there will be lying signs and wonders by which many will be led astray. Many will be deceived. Satan will masquerade as an angel of light.

His first great beast and the second beast that is his prophet are going to convince the world that he is the savior and the signs will convince them. We don't need signs, we have the word and the spirit and that's where the power of God rests. God wants to do a miracle, he is free to do so, but I will believe whether he does anything miraculous or not because I trust what he has told me.

That has to be the foundation, the pillar and ground of truth for the church is the word of God, not I had an experience, ball of fire came from heaven and descended on my head. So with that, we'll pause and take our break. When we come back, we're going to move forward through this sequence of events to the presentation of this problem by this nobleman to the Lord Jesus regarding his son.